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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 000889

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SUBJECT: A/S BOUCHER'S MEETING WITH HIS MFA COUNTERPART ON
CENTRAL ASIA

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Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR JOSIAH ROSENBLATT FOR REASO
NS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Jean-Francois Terral, A/S-equivalent for non-EU Europe and Central Asia, told Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs Richard Boucher on March 1 that France supported Germany's engagement in Central Asia and fully backed EU Special Representative (EUSR) Pierre Morel's strategy. Terral welcomed Turkmenistan Foreign Minister Meredov's agreement to attend an EU Troika/Central Asian Foreign Ministers' meeting in Astana to discuss the new EU strategy, calling it a positive political signal. Terral was pessimistic, however, about Turkmenistan's ability to make significant progress, adding that France was in a "wait and see" mode. He expressed concern over Uzbekistan's cancellation of a second round of talks with the EU on Andijon and stressed that he and his counterparts in other member states were lobbying the Uzbeks to reconsider. On Kazakhstan's Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe 2009 Chairmanship bid, Terral agreed with Boucher that the Kazakhstanis needed to show results on reform, though he noted that he is concerned France would likely be satisfied with a "fig leaf." Terral also concurred with Boucher's judgment that Kyrgyzstan was in disarray. He described the situation as regime collapse, followed by chaos and power grabbing. Boucher saw EU Special Representative Morel on the margins of the meeting with Terral. They discussed the EU dialogue with Uzbekistan, the OSCE 2009 Chairmanship bid by Kazakhstan, and Morel's upcoming travels. END SUMMARY

FRANCE SUPPORTS GERMANY AND MOREL

¶2. (C) Terral told Boucher on March 1 that while France had "no new or original ideas on the situation," it was following Germany's lead on Central Asia and was supportive of its efforts. He added that his bureau was the "back office" for EU Special Representative Pierre Morel and stressed that "France and Germany would guarantee a satisfactory continuation" of the EU strategy in the region throughout the Portuguese and Slovenian presidencies. Terral said that the EU would hold a meeting of Central Asia Foreign Ministers in Astana on March 28, where the EU troika would present its new strategy for the region. Turkmenistan Foreign Minister Meredov has already agreed to attend, something the EU saw as a good political signal on regional cooperation. Terral also expressed hope that the EU plan would lead to more

constructive and organized dialogue with Russia about the region; the Russians "feel at home" in Central Asia, he said.

WAIT AND SEE IN TURKMENISTAN

13. (C) Boucher explained U.S. thinking on Turkmenistan, including efforts to engage with the newly elected government on reform and energy issues, as well the need for the international community to express encouragement. Terral responded that, "I have no idea about Turkmenistan. Everyone is excited, but I think we will just wait and see." He estimated that expectations about progress in the country may be exaggerated. "The Turkmen are saying some good things," he said, but once the regime is threatened by change, Terral feared it would slip back into old habits. Getting Turkmenistan out of Russia's grip, he surmised, was the most serious challenge.

EU/UZBEKISTAN AND ANDIJON

14. (C) Terral flatly stated that France did not care for the Karimov regime but was also not in favor of isolating it. He judged EU efforts to engage in dialogue as essential and said that France supported opening a second track (in addition to human rights) of talks on security. Islamic radicals, Terral said, posed a security concern for Uzbekistan, and by extension, the entire region. Terral informed Boucher that Uzbekistan had just cancelled a second round of talks with the EU on Andijon, and that he and his European counterparts would be lobbying for reconsideration. Boucher noted that any lifting of sanctions should only come as the result of demonstrated progress on the part of the Karimov regime.

KAZAKHSTAN; OSCE 2009

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15. (C) Kazakhstan is the most important country in the region for France, Terral noted. The vast amounts of energy resources and uranium deposits make the country strategically significant. He agreed with Boucher's assessment that Kazakhstan needed to invest more in its neighbors, and said the EU would encourage the Kazakhstanis to do more in Turkmenistan. Unfortunately, Terral noted, Chirac would not be going to Astana as originally planned, which diminished the opportunities for any serious bilateral engagement.

16. (C) Terral agreed with Boucher on the need to see demonstrated progress on democratic reform before endorsing Kazakhstan for the OSCE 2009 Chairmanship, and expressed concern that France would likely be convinced by a "fig leaf." He noted, however, that the EU message to Kazakhstan was the same in substance as that of the U.S. Boucher said we wanted to support the Kazakhstani bid but would need some substantial advancements from Nazerbayev, such as judicial reform and the transfer of some powers to parliament as outlined in his recent speech.

KYRGYZSTAN

17. (C) Kyrgyzstan, Terral said, was in complete disarray. He dismissed the idea of a revolution in the country, characterizing the situation as a regime collapse which was followed by chaos and power grabbing. He was not optimistic that the government would find stability in the near term.

PIERRE MOREL

18. (C) Boucher met briefly with EU Special Representative Pierre Morel on the margins of his meeting with Terral. Morel briefed on his efforts to get Uzbekistan to come to a

previously agreed second meeting with the EU to discuss human rights and Andijon. He was not surprised at the Uzbek move, but thought it was in everyone,s best interest to get them back at the table. Boucher said Deputy Assistant Secretary Feigenbaum was in Tashkent and could assist, if asked. Morel said he preferred handling it through EU channels for the moment, but did not rule out U.S. intervention at a later time. Morel confirmed the March 28 EU Troika meeting with Foreign Ministers and said he saw Meredov,s confirmed attendance as an excellent political signal. Boucher briefly touched on the U.S. position regarding Kazakhstan,s OSCE 2009 Chairmanship bid, to which Morel said he "completely agreed."

COMMENT

¶9. (C) Terral was not well briefed nor particularly engaged on the issues. His relaxed attitude likely reflects his imminent departure to become the new French Ambassador to Serbia. It was clear, however, that France is working closely at the COEST level with the Germans and EUSR Pierre Morel to move the EU agenda in the region forward.

¶10. (U) This message has been cleared by SCA Senior Advisor Caitlin Hayden.

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